

**Remarks of Alessandra Borchi on the occasion of the Award Ceremony of the UN SIDS Partnerships Awards – UN Headquarters, 10 July 2024, 10 am – 1 pm**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor and privilege for me to be with you today to receive the prestigious UN SIDS Partnerships Award, in the social category, on behalf of UNESCO and in recognition of the results achieved by the programme “Transcultura: Integrating Cuba, the Caribbean, and the European Union through Culture and Creativity”, funded by the European Union.

I would like to convey our most sincere gratitude to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the High Representative for Small Island Developing States, and the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS, for their continued commitment to supporting sustainable development in SIDS and for believing in our work.

Transcultura is the demonstration of how trust and partnerships make things happen. It was launched in 2020, targeting young culture professionals from 17 countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago). Its objective was to create cultural connections between countries in the Caribbean and between the Caribbean and Europe.

Then, COVID hit and affected the cultural and creative sector like nothing else had done before. It was a challenge, certainly, but also the occasion to understand that the professionalization of the culture and creative sectors needed to be accompanied by the creation of opportunities: courses on cultural grant proposals writing, dedicated thematic mentorships, grant schemes, mapping of funding mechanisms, networking and mobility programs.

As of 1 July 2024, Transcultura is UNESCO’s largest programme in Latin America and the Caribbean and – most importantly – a springboard for young creators in the region. A first-ever Caribbean Cultural Training Hub, bringing together 7 high-level educational institutions from the region, has been created. Over 1,600 professionals have participated in its training, exchange and support to entrepreneurship initiatives. Over 300 tons of materials have been procured to provide courses in the 28 themes of the cultural and creative industries. Over 200 organizations and cultural institutions have

been involved, such as WOMEX, the International Film Festival of Berlin, PhotoEspana or the Biennale of Venice.

We could not have done this alone, and I would hence like to acknowledge and thank our partners. The European Union, in first place, for their vision and continued support. With 15 million euros (16.5 million US dollars), Transcultura is the most significant EU investment in culture in the region. The Ministries of Culture and National commissions for UNESCO of Cuba and all countries involved in the implementation of the programme. The Office of the Historian of the City of Havana. All the European and Caribbean cultural institutions which have participated in one or several activities.

I would like to highlight that this award given to UNESCO through Transcultura goes well beyond a specific programme. It is a testimony of trust in the transformative power of culture to achieve sustainable development. UNESCO will continue its efforts to strengthen SIDS resilience across all dimensions of culture, including by promoting creative entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods in the field of culture, as well as leveraging culture to strengthen climate and environmental resilience.

Allow me to conclude with a quote by Mark Twain, which I think reflects the spirit behind the work not only of Transcultura, but of all the winners of the UN SIDS Partnerships Awards, in the different categories: “They did not know it was impossible, so they did it”.

Thank you. Merci. Gracias.